UNITED
NATIONS

A S

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/275
S/1995/555
10 July 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fiftieth session
Item 111 of the preliminary list*
REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fiftieth year

Letter dated 10 July 1995 from the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward herewith a press statement by the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Honourable Samuel J. Sitta, delivered on 19 June 1995, regarding the explosive refugee situation in the United Republic of Tanzania, resulting from its neighbouring countries, Burundi and Rwanda.

I should be grateful if you could arrange to have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 111 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Daudi N. MWAKAWAGO
Permanent Representative

* A/50/50/Rev.1.

95-20441 (E) 110795 120795

/...

ANNEX

Press statement by the Honourable Samuel J. Sitta, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, delivered on 19 June 1995

The United Republic of Tanzania is at present hosting over 1,430,000 refugees. Refugees from Rwanda and Burundi constitute over half of this number. The track record of the United Republic of Tanzania regarding refugee influxes into the country since independence and the manner in which those unfortunate people have been welcomed and treated is undisputed. The United Republic of Tanzania has provided asylum to hundreds of thousands of refugees not only from Rwanda and Burundi but also from other countries such as Zaire, Somalia, Mozambique, the Sudan, Uganda, Malawi, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe, the Comoros, Seychelles, Ethiopia, Cape Verde and even the former Yugoslavia. The Government has even given citizenship to some of those refugees, thus making them members of the Tanzanian community. But, after a period of time, refugees from nearly all neighbouring countries have gone back to their countries because peace, justice and the political situations in those countries improved. Quite different from that trend, refugees from Rwanda and Burundi, from 1993 to the present time, have continued to pour into the United Republic of Tanzania. Ethnic differences, and the lack of good governance and accountability, make these two countries refugee-generating States. The United Republic of Tanzania cannot afford to take more than it can absorb and any move from Burundi or Rwanda will be met with equal force. The world should understand us.

Speaking of Rwanda, reference should be made to the Arusha accord, particularly to the articles on power-sharing and the return of refugees. If we reread the accord, you will agree with the United Republic of Tanzania that the plight and the solution, by and large, are enshrined therein. In order to avoid any future outbreak of ethnic tensions in Rwanda, we call upon the Rwandan Government to create the correct political atmosphere in the country by creating a government of national unity, thus defusing any resentments that could lead to regroupings for a renewal of war in the subregion.

Efforts at implementing the Bujumbura plan of action, particularly after signing the tripartite voluntary repatriation agreement with the Government of Rwanda on 12 April 1995, have not helped much, even in restoring normalcy in the refugee camps. The implementation part of the initiative taken at the Nairobi regional summit, on 7 January 1995, has been a disappointment in that the international community has not been able to provide the required funds and logistical inputs. While the international community is putting pressure on the United Republic of Tanzania to accept its international obligation regarding refugees, more action should be taken with regard to international burden-sharing as far as the refugees are concerned.

As to Burundi, a new exodus of refugees was prompted by ethnic unrest and increased violence at the end of March 1995. Rwandan refugees who had settled in Burundi were forced out of their designated camps; yet, the international community expected the United Republic of Tanzania to continue to honour its international responsibility by accepting them on its soil while Burundi chased

them out. Double standards cannot be entertained, particularly at this time when mass migration threatens the very survival of our State. The Convention signed by the Government of Burundi in September 1994 offers a brilliant opportunity to solve the crisis. The ongoing killings do not augur well for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. We condemn, in the strongest terms possible, the ongoing carnage. No excuse whatsoever is acceptable to any civilized society. The Tanzanian Government, therefore, calls upon the Burundi Army and the opposing factional militia groups to respect human life. The role of the Army and of the Government is to protect the sovereignty of Burundi. We call upon present and past political leaders to stop advocating their political programmes based on ethnicity. This conflict must be resolved internally and the United Republic of Tanzania should not be expected to produce a miracle solution outside a framework involving internal forces. Owing to the prevailing political instability we are witnessing in Burundi, the United Republic of Tanzania will continue to deploy its troops along the border area in order to protect the Tanzanian local population, and in order to avoid further Burundi/Rwanda refugee influxes into the country.

The continued presence of refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania is a serious cause of insecurity for our country and a potential cause of conflict with our neighbours. In addition, the huge refugee population has a devastating effect on our country's economy, infrastructure and environment. Social services like water, health and education have deteriorated and food security has been endangered. Furthermore, some refugees are involved in criminal offences, thus increasing resentment by the local population.

While recognizing the spirit of solving the refugee problem, which was initiated by the United Republic of Tanzania during the reconciliation talks in Arusha, by the Presidents of the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire at Gbadolite on 22 and 23 December 1994 and followed by the Nairobi summit in January 1995, it is pertinent that the onus of responsibility is on the authorities of both Burundi and Rwanda to create conditions conducive to the safe return of refugees to their countries of origin. The United Republic of Tanzania remains committed to the Convention on Refugees adopted by the Organization of African Unity in 1969 and our record on this is self-evident.